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The Newsletter for friends and members of OHFS  
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## Festival of Greek Music & Dance 2003: Easter Traditions and Customs

The Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society proudly presents the "Festival of Greek Music & Dance 2003"! This will be the third year in a row that OHFS will present a concert in Chicago featuring renowned folk singers and musicians from Greece. Next year's event will take place on Saturday, April 5, 2003, at the auditorium of the Christian Heritage Center in Northfield. Audiences have responded with great enthusiasm following the previous concerts that featured dances and songs from the regions of Macedonia, Thrace and the Greek Islands.

The material to be presented at the upcoming festival will offer a unique perspective on traditions and customs of the Easter period from various regions of Greece. There is an abundance of folk dances, songs and traditions prior to, during and after the Easter period. The Orpheus Dance Troupe, with the help of the visiting artists, hopes to bring these traditions to life during this event.

Kyriakos Gouventas, an exceptional violin player, will be returning to Chicago for the 2003 Festival of Greek Music and Dance. He participated during the 2001 Festival accompanying Chronis Aidonidis. Kyriakos was born in 1966 in Thessaloniki, where he studied music theory and violin at the Conservatory of Northern Greece. Since 1980 he has collaborated actively with a wide range of musicians and orchestras in Greece and abroad, in performances of folk music, rebetika, and of popular as well as classical music, and he teaches violin in the Department of Traditional Music at the

University of Epirus. He has played in over 1000 performances and at least 600 recording in Greece and abroad.

The Orpheus Dance Troupe has been preparing for this event for some time and members have been able to research and practice a wide range of material from various areas in Greece. One example is the traditions and songs of the Easter "Lazarines", women primarily from the northern regions of Greece who sing and dance characteristic folk tunes during the Saturday of Lazaros as well as the next day, Palm Sunday.

So, save the date for the Festival of Greek Music & Dance 2003 on Saturday, April 5, 2003. Tickets and more details will become available soon. Make sure you check our web site at [www.ohfs.org](http://www.ohfs.org) for updated information. ☐



Kyriakos Gouventas

## Youth group update

How did the Orpheus Youth Group spend their summer vacation? At practice, of course! These troopers toughed out the heat of June and July learning new steps and polishing and perfecting the material they learned from the previous year. No region in Greece was spared—we covered mainland dances as well as island, and even some of the “spoon dance” material from Asia Minor.

The youth group took a two-week break after the end-of-the-year recital on May 19th and began the 8-week program the first week of June. About 25 youth kids, ages 10-14, joined for the youth session—by far our best enrollment since the summer program began three years ago. Experienced members were joined by new kids who were anxious to learn something new about their culture.

The youth prepared for a special summer performance at the Greek Festival for the Annunciation Cathedral in downtown



Members of the Orpheus Youth group from the Northbrook branch pose for a group picture.

Chicago last July. About 15 kids braved the evening's sizzling heat for a lively show that combined island and mainland material. Great job, kids!

The 2002-2003 Orpheus Youth Group began on September 12th, and we are busy preparing material for two target

performances—"Christmas Around the World" on Saturday, December 21 and the upcoming concert on April 5th. In addition to a number of dances, the Orpheus Youth Group will be complementing the presentation with a series of children's folk songs. Here's to a great year! ☐



Members of the Orpheus Youth group from the Glenview branch pose for a group picture after practice.

# A Traditional Village Wedding

by Vasiliki Kakavas-Kouchoukos

It's not often that one gets the opportunity to attend a traditional wedding in Greece. Luckily for me my sister and fellow Orpheus member, Christina, planned her wedding in the Peloponnese this past September. When Christina and her fiancé Marjan headed to the hills outside the city of Kalamata to celebrate their nuptials, little did they realize the treasure trove of traditional customs that our family and neighbors in Kalamata had planned for them!

We rented a house in the small village of Verga overlooking Kalamata and the Messinian Bay. Why Verga you ask? Well, the village's 400-year-old village church is located steps away and is believed to have a miracle icon of the Virgin. And better yet, from the courtyard there is a stupendous view of the Kalamata valley and the Messinian Bay below. Due to its relative isolation, this mountain area on the edge of Tayegetos Mountain has clung fiercely to its traditional ways. For Christina and Marjan, this was a perfect setting for a romantic and traditional wedding.

At my aunt's house, which was decorated with white tulle and ribbons, all the women in the family participated in making the *boubounieres* (wedding favors) a few days before the wedding. These treats of odd numbers of *koufeta* (sugar coated almonds) were wrapped in handkerchiefs. Making rice and *koufeta* packets for tossing at the bride and groom were also on the agenda for the night. With the help of some Metaxa brandy my aunts and mother sang songs to celebrate the upcoming happy event.

On the day of the ceremony, *koufeta* were placed on the tray with the wedding crowns. After the ceremony these *koufeta* were offered to the single women by the priest to place under their pillows in order to dream of their future husbands.

The night before the wedding, Christina was escorted to our aunt's house in Kalamata to keep her well away from Marjan. On the wedding day, while Christina was busy getting beautiful, back up in Verga, Marjan, his family and friends were experiencing a true village celebration. A cousin had arranged for a traditional group of musicians (with

*laouto*, *daouli*, and *klarino* in hand) to serenade the groom while he was dressing. On learning of the band's arrival, several of the older village women arrived at the house to sing a number of songs especially for the groom. This led to an impromptu dancing party with the *Koumbaro* (Best Man) leading the dances while the village women sang.

With the sun beginning to set and the band loudly playing, an entire house full of guests, family and neighbors led Marjan down the village road to the church where he awaited Christina's arrival on the steps. When the dark car adorned with dozens of red roses and white tulle pulled up, the band began to play again. An uncle led Christina to Marjan, placed her on his arm and the priest led the entire group into the church.

Unlike in the States, the village churches in Greece do not have pews. This allows for the wedding table to be set right in the middle of the church so that all attending the wedding can crowd around the couple to watch the ceremony. When the priest led Christina and Marjan around the table for the Dance of Isaiah, hundreds of arms tossed *koufeta* and rice at the couple for good luck. Several times, the priest took refuge behind the bible he held up to his

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Accompanied by the band, the village women sang traditional wedding songs and started the dancing with the Koumbaro.



Christina and Marjan leaving the church right after the ceremony.

# Orpheus Dances Greek on the Oprah Show!

The *Oprah Winfrey Show* has been one of the most popular talk shows hosted by probably one of the most recognized personalities of the entertainment industry.

So when the Orpheus Dance Troupe was asked to participate at the show's taping, a sense of excitement was in the air. The show was going to feature Nia Vardalos, the writer and main character of the movie *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. This production has now been established as the most successful independent movie production of all time grossing over \$180 million after an initial production cost of about \$5 million. It debuted in April and its popularity is still growing! During opening day here in Chicago a large contingency of Orpheus members went to see the movie and barely made it inside the theater as most showings were sold out!

The first segment of the taping for the Oprah Show took place at Pegasus restaurant in Chicago's Greek Town where about 60 of Nia's relatives and close friends had been assembled to greet her. Among them were her parents who returned from Greece, while on vacation, just to be part of this occasion. Some of Nia's relatives actually live in the Chicago area. In addition to her relatives, the parents of Rita Wilson, producer of *My Big*



Pictured with the star of the surprise hit movie "My Big Fat Greek Wedding", Nia Vardalos.

*Fat Greek Wedding*, were present as well. Rita is of Greek descent and she was the one that helped make the movie a reality as she convinced her husband, actor Tom Hanks, to undertake the production costs.

The Orpheus members were assigned to teach Oprah and Nia some basic Greek Dance steps. They both caught on rather quickly and were having a great time. Later, everyone was bused to Harpo studios for the remainder of the show in front of a regular studio audience. This is the second time that the Orpheus Dance

Troupe has worked with Oprah Winfrey. The first time was during the opening ceremonies of the World Cup of Soccer in 1994 at Soldier Field where Oprah was the master of ceremonies. The Orpheus Dance Troupe was among 24 dance groups that performed that day representing the countries that made the final phase of the this event.

Many congratulations to Nia Vardalos for all the success that her movie has enjoyed and being courageous in pursuing her dream! 🇬🇷

## spotlight on Orpheus Youth dancer...



John Revis

**Name:**  
John Revis

**Home Town:**  
Northern Chicago suburbs

**Parents/Family from:**  
My parents were born in Chicago.  
My dad's parents are from Korinthos.  
My mom's parents are from Kalamata

**Occupation:**  
6th grade student at Highcrest  
Middle School

# International House- Celebrating Seventy Years

For 70 years, the International House at the University of Chicago has served as both a dynamic program center and residence hall to students from across the globe providing a safe haven and environment where boundaries are crossed, cultural gaps are bridged and people of vastly divergent beliefs learn to accept differences in thought and tradition.

The embodiment of intercultural cooperation and understanding, I-House, founded in 1932 through a gift from John D. Rockefeller, Jr., has an impressive history of embracing multiculturalism through forums, conferences, and the performing arts. The I-House serves as a vehicle to increase international exchange throughout the Midwest-and throughout the world.

Beginning October 4th, in honor of I-House's 70th anniversary, I-House launched a yearlong calendar of festive and informative events designed to celebrate as well as advance its prominence and visibility with friends, alumni and members of Chicago's academic and public communities. The anniversary plan is intended to take

advantage of the House's strengths while moving it in new directions that will extend its citywide public profile and institutional identity. The goal of the anniversary year is to enable International House to continue to expand its links with the University of Chicago and the City of Chicago in ways that are commensurate with its institutional position of promoting cross-cultural understandings and respect and the exchange of ideas among people of all nations and backgrounds.

On Friday, October 4th, the Orpheus Dance Troupe had the pleasure of being part of an exciting evening featuring three Bulgarian bands, Kolorit, Balkanci and Izgerv and legendary Bulgarian clarinet virtuoso, Ivo Papazov. Ivo Papazov is the founder of and most influential musician in the *svatbardki* style – “wedding band style”-which is a fusion of traditional Bulgarian folk, Romany



Orpheus Members with John Kuo, second from right and his wife Galia, fourth from right, organizers of the concert celebrating the 70th Year Anniversary of the International House at the University of Chicago.

(gypsy), and jazz musical styles characterized by driving rhythms in Balkan meters, fluid improvisations, and dramatic key changes. The Orpheus Dance Troupe presented a suite of dances from Thrace, Northern Greece. Dancing followed the concert accompanied by live music until the morning hours. Many thanks to our friends, folklore enthusiasts John and Galia Kuo who helped organize such a splendid event. We hope to have the pleasure of participating in future events that promote cultural diversity and friendship. ☐

**Time dancing with Orpheus:**

One year

**Thoughts on dancing:**

Its fun!

**Favorite dance:**

The Cretan *Syrto*

**Most vivid Orpheus memory:**

My first performance with OHFS at the Museum of Science and Industry, December 2001

**Favorite Greek dish:**

*Saganaki* and *avgolemono* (egg-lemon soup)

**Favorite place in Greece:**

Kalamata

**Hobbies/Sports/other interests:**

I play the piano and the string bass. I also like to play basketball and baseball.

**Where I heard about Orpheus Dance Troupe:**

I saw them perform at SS Peter and Paul Greek Church and my *yiayia* (grandmother) signed me up. ☐

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head. After the ceremony, a few rounds of spontaneous dances broke out in the church courtyard since the band was still at hand.

As local Kalamata tradition dictates, Christina and Marjan headed back up the hill to the house so that Marjan's family could *meloso* (sweeten) the bride and groom. Marjan's sisters stopped them at the doorway and bound them together in a white silk scarf; symbolically uniting them

in a beautiful but strong bond. Once across the threshold, Marjan's sisters fed both the bride and groom a spoonful of honey to ensure that their life together will be sweet. Next, the couple was instructed to step on a piece of iron to ensure that their union together will be *siderenio* (strong). Since we couldn't find a traditional horseshoe, we used a fireplace poker instead!

Then, it was off to a nearby local taverna where the wedding guests enjoyed a night of traditional Greek food and music. The trio of musicians who played

for Marjan at the house were joined by the rest of the band (*bouzouki*, *santouri*, *toumbeleki*, violin) who played late into the night. Since a cousin dances in a local folk dance group, he arranged for a small performance of traditional dances at the reception. Being an enthusiastic Orpheus member, Christina could hardly contain her excitement and jumped up to participate.

Thank you Christina and Marjan for providing us with this unique opportunity. Congratulations!! 📷

## photo gallery



Performing the dance "Zonaradikos" at the Annunciation Cathedral Summer Festival.



At the International Night at the Village of Niles hosted by the Sister Cities Program. Pictured with Mayor Nicholas Blase, who is of Greek descent. Mr. Blase has served as Mayor of Niles for over forty years.



Pictured with the parents of Nía Vardalos at the Pegasus Greek Restaurant at Chicago's Greek Town.



Performing in front of the Martin Theater at Ravinia's Summer Festival during the International night.



Performing the dance "Koutsos" from Thrace at Chicago's Greek Town Festival



Dr. Stavros Alexopoulos welcoming visitors at the Orpheus booth at Chicago's Greek Town Festival.



Dancing with residents of the Greek-American Nursing and Rehabilitation Center at the conclusion of the Orpheus performance.



A light moment prior to the performance at the summer festival at Ss. Peter & Paul church.

## personals

Welcome aboard new Youth Members: **Constantinos Angelakos, Spiros Angelakos, John Arvanitis, Alexander Benzinger, Alcaeos Bolaris, Maria Dolomas, Eleni Florakos, Alexander Karahalios, Dean Karras, Dean Kazamias, Christos Michelis, Michael Psomas, Marino Philis, Anna-Maria Savalis, and Alexia Theodorakis.**

Welcome aboard new Adult members: **Anna Collis, Evan Adams, Eleni Apostolopoulos, Dimitra Dallas, Paraskevi Katsis, Danielle Kazeos, Joanna Lialios, Georgia Makris, Chris Matsakis, Jenny Melahoures, Vicky Melahoures, and Renee Papageorgiou.**

Congratulations to **Elpida Rallis** for her first performance with Orpheus at the Greek Town Festival.

Congratulations to **Marjan Kodric** and **Christina Kakavas** who were married on September 15th in Kalamata Greece. *Na zisete!*

Birthday greetings to **Katerina Trikkas** on October 5th; **William Pierce** on October 8th; **Angie Siargos** on October 7th; **Christina**



**Dallas** on October 10th; **Marianna Damianides** on October 11; **Eleni Poulakis** on October 12th; **Angela Trikkas** on October 30th; **Joy Economos** on November 7th; **Jamie Leberis** on December 7th; **Vaggeli Giorgas** on December 9; **Dimitri Dallas** on December 12th; **Georgia Limberopoulos** on December 17th; **George Kakis** on December 18th; **Alexis Khosravani** on December 25th and **Yannis & Kosta Economou** on December 30th. *Na ta ekatostisete!*

Namesday wishes to **Dimitra Bounas, Dimitri Dallas** and **Jim Thanopoulos** on October 26; **Angie Siargos** on November 8; **Katerina Economou, Kathy Tomaras, Kathy Skondos, Catherine Grosso, Katerina Trikkas** on November 25th; **Barbara Dallas** and **Barbara Siargos** on December 4; **Nick Livaditis, Niki Rigas** and **Nikos Salapatas** on December 6th; and **Christina Dallas, Christina Economou, Christina Grosso, Christina Kakavas Kodric, Christina Minakakis** and **Christina Pagones** on December 25th. *Chronia Polla!*



# performance schedule

## Christmas Around the World

Museum of Science and Industry  
57th and Lake Shore Drive  
Chicago, IL  
Saturday, December 21  
2:30 p.m.

## Winter Dance Conference 2003

Atlanta, Georgia  
January 16-20, 2003

## Kalavrita Society Dinner Dance

Crystal Palace Banquets  
Des Plaines, IL  
Saturday, March 22, 2003  
8:00 p.m.

## Greek American Parade

Greek Town - Halsted Street  
Chicago, IL  
Sunday, March 30, 2003  
2:30 p.m.

## Festival of Greek Music and Dance

### "Easter Traditions and Customs"

Christian Heritage Academy  
Auditorium  
315 Waukegan Road  
Northfield, IL  
Saturday, April 5, 2003,  
7:30 p.m.

*Performance schedule and times are subject to change. For the latest information visit <http://www.ohfs.org>.*

## practice schedule

### Orpheus Adult Group

#### Beginner/Intermediate:

6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

#### Intermediate/Advanced:

7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

#### Every Thursday at:

St. John Lutheran Church  
3020 Milwaukee Ave.  
Northbrook, IL  
*(one mile north from the  
intersection of Lake/Euclid  
and Milwaukee Ave.)*

### Orpheus Youth Group:

#### Every Thursday at:

5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.  
St. John Lutheran Church  
3020 Milwaukee Ave.  
Northbrook, IL

#### Every Saturday at:

1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.  
New Church  
Multipurpose Room  
74 Park Dr., Glenview, IL  
*(one block west of Shermer/Glenview Rds)*

**Youth Group:** Members ages 10-14 (Northbrook and Glenview locations).

**Beginners:** Members with little or no previous dance experience.

**Intermediate:** Dancers who have shown progress in the beginners' class attend the last hour of practice. At the discretion of the instructors, the intermediate level dancers will be practicing in a separate line.

All dancers, especially beginners, are encouraged to obtain a personal tape of the music used for performances, in order to practice on one's own and become accustomed to the music. Please provide John or Kostas Economou with a blank cassette tape.

Submissions for the Winter issue of *Lyra* will be accepted until December 20, 2002. We are always interested in educational essays/articles dealing with the subjects of Greek folk dance, folk music, and folk traditions. We continue to accept personal announcements and all other submissions pertinent to the dance troupe and its membership. If an individual wishes to contribute material on a continuous basis, please inform the Editor.